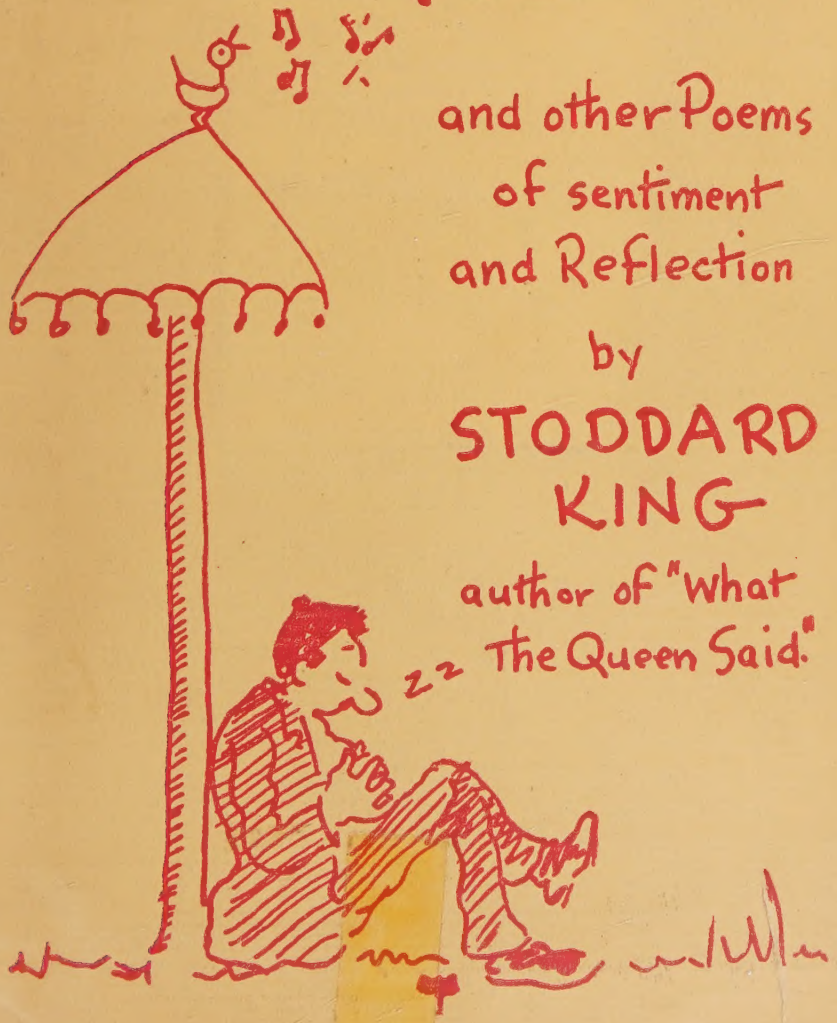
THE RASPBERRY TREE

and other Poems
of sentiment
and Reflection

by

STODDARD KING

author of "What The Queen Said."



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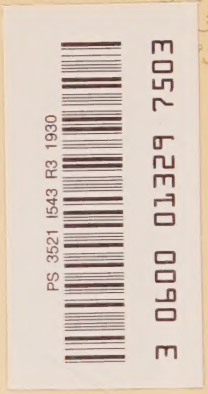

RASPBERRY REFLECTIONS

The author of WHAT THE QUEEN SAID and LISTEN TO THE MOCKING BIRD bursts into rhyme again and being a modern poet, he sings not of cabbages and kings but of adverbial idylls, saturation points, notary publics and practically noiseless refrigerators. Sitting beneath his raspberry tree he views with kindly tolerance the pageant of life. He has mellowed and matured and grown a habit of philosophic meditation but his sparkle and gusto are not a whit abated.

1778

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

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THE RASPBERRY TREE

Books by

STODDARD KING

Listen to the Mocking Bird

Grand Right and Left

What the Queen Said

The Raspberry Tree

THE RASPBERRY TREE

And Other Poems of Sentiment and Reflection

BY

STODDARD KING

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TO

MY MOTHER

THESE *verses, or memory gems, as I like to call them, were first printed in the Spokane* SPOKESMAN-REVIEW, *where the author has the run of a column. They have been put in book form, not because of any general public demand, but chiefly because I like to read them aloud whenever I can get an audience, and carrying clippings is a bother.*

S. K.

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THE RASPBERRY TREE

THE RASPBERRY TREE

When I and the universe disagree,
I go and sit by the Raspberry Tree;
Under the ripe red raspberry rows
I lie on my back and wiggle my toes,
And listen for hours to the song in G
That the cuckoo sings
In the Raspberry Tree.

It isn't your fault (the cuckoo sings)
That people are people, and things are things,
That wheat and barley are cheaper than chaff,
And two times two is three and a half;
It isn't your fault that swans are geese
And dreams are sold for a dime apiece;
It isn't your fault
And it isn't your loss
That a stitch in time will gather no moss.

When the morning stars sing a bit off key,
I sit out under the Raspberry Tree;
The ripe red raspberries grow in tiers,
I close my eyes and wiggle my ears,

And I spend the whole of the afternoon
While the cuckoo sings me a ragtime tune.

What if you tried (is the cuckoo's song)
To fix whatever is going wrong?
The world is wide and the ocean's deep,
And you should worry and miss your sleep!
Losing your shirt is the least of ills—
Think what it saves in laundry bills!
Break your heart and it won't be fun,
But put it together and see it run!
It can't be helped,
But it can be mended—
Early to bed is soonest ended.

To be, says Hamlet, or not to be,
But I sit under my Raspberry Tree;
Thinking thoughts that are silly and kind,
I lie on my back and wiggle my mind,
With my soul attuned to the song in G
That the cuckoo sings
In the Raspberry Tree.

THE QUINCE

The legend tells that long ago
A poet (not a very great one)
Was wandering where quinces grow
And, thinking it an apple, ate one.
So potent was the gastric pang,
In spite of surgeons and of leeches,
That ever after, when he sang,
He stuck to cherries, pears, and peaches.
And not a single poet since
Has praised the quince.

Now, quince preserves are fit and meet
To be inspiring any poet,
But absent-mindedly bards eat,
They taste the fruit, but do not know it.
The quince they wholly disregard,
Pretending that they never saw one,
And all because some early bard
Was dumb enough to eat a raw one.
Complete indifference they evince
Toward the quince.

The only thing there is to do
To end this rank discrimination
Is to invite the lyric crew
To a quince jelly demonstration—
With other things to eat, of course,
Beefsteak and onions, eggs and bacon—
And thus persuade them that their course
Has been short-sighted and mistaken.
But, as things are, we poets wince
When you say quince.

ADVERBIAL IDYLL

"*Practically noiseless.*"
REFRIGERATOR AD.

A PRACTICALLY noiseless icebox,
Making practically heatless ice,
Was sold by a first-class salesman
At a practically profitless price.

It was bought by a brisk young housewife
(And her practically helpless spouse)
And stood on the rear veranda
Of a practically paid-for house.

It shone with surpassing whiteness
That practically naught could mar,
And shared its owners' affection
With a practically faultless car.

But once, with the heat at ninety,
Which was practically in the shade,
The icebox was left open
By the practically full-time maid.

From the practically noiseless icebox
Such chilly zephyrs blew
That a cold wave swept the country . . .
This is practically almost true.

"THE SATURATION POINT HAS NOT BEEN REACHED"

When radio fills with squeak and boom
The tiniest nook of every room,
When fiddles meow and saxes bleat
From every window on the street,
When jaunty advertising talks
Pursue us on our daily walks
And nightly jazzophonic themes
Accompany our virtuous dreams,
When walls of steel nor granite blocks
Foil the ubiquitous magnavox,
Or still the noises that are brayed,
Then, not before, the radio trade
To saturation will be fed . . .
And I, praise heaven, shall be dead.

BILL OF FARE

Men eat at different places,
According to their salaries,
And feed their various faces
With vitamins and calories.
Some raise a cry for ham and eggs, while some eat shredded hay,
But the basis of their diet is the Speaker of the Day.

Though viands sweetly savor,
Though silverware be glistening,
Our business men most favor
The simple art of listening.
They hurry through the eating part as quickly as they may,
And raise expectant faces to the Speaker of the Day.

Exalted are their wishes,
They hunger mostly mentally,
They trifle with their dishes,
But only incidentally.

The noon hour finds them flocking to the handiest café—
But it's not the chef who lures them; it's the Speaker of the Day.

We thus observe that eating
Is highly educational,
For art is long, time fleeting,
Addresses inspirational;
And it's the queer, eccentric chap who hides himself away,
And masticates his sirloin with no Speaker of the Day.

PROGRAM NOTES

My mind rambles on in a curious way
When I watch a big symphony orchestra play;
I wonder what strife
Has embittered the life
Of people who play the bass viol,
Since they never, by any chance, smiol.
I wonder why flutists are fat
  As Victorian beadles—
Is it diet that makes them like that,
  Or melodious tweedles?
I envy the nimble
Young man with the cymbal,
Who zings only twice, let us say,
And is through for the day.
What thoughts do the idle hours bring
While he's waiting to zing?

And I pity the men with the fiddles—
  I think it's a crime
They should sit as on extra-hot griddles
  And work all the time.

Yet they always seem gay,
Even eager to play;
They are clearly the symphony's drudges,
While the man with the tuba begrudges
Each miserly grunt
For the people out front.

My thoughts ramble on in a haphazard way
When I hear a big symphony orchestra play.
The music soars high on harmonious wings
While I am considering frivolous things,
Such as who cut the hair of the kettledrum drummer,
And what do French horn players do in the summer?

TRUE CONFESSION ITEM

Once at a party
A clever fellow said
I had a purple aura,
A royal purple aura,
With spots of bright red.
This seemed to interest
The ladies in the crowd,
Though the woman who came with me
Snorted out loud.

One of the ladies,
Whom I hadn't known,
Said to me later
In a confidential tone
That the same clever fellow
(Who is psychic, I think)
Had given her a cute aura,
Feminine and sweet aura,
All a soft pink.

Another lady told me
She believed in Fate,
And let me bring her sandwiches
And carry back the plate,
A jolly, plump damsel
Who was on a diet
Said, "I'd not have guessed it,
You're always so quiet!"

All through the party
I felt much cheered,
Though the woman who came with me
Openly jeered;
And straightening my necktie,
I went to the lad
Who gave me the aura,
The royal purple aura,
And thanked him for the ad.

LINES TO A NEW DICTIONARY

Old words are cold words,
Nothing but a bore;
I prefer new words
I haven't seen before.
Any recent dictionary
Has them on tap—
Words like *resupinate*,
Lyncean, *haplography*,
Yaffle and *yapp*.

Just what a yaffle is
Doesn't much matter;
Maybe it's like a yapp
But just a little flatter.
A man won a yapp once
Gambling in a raffle,
And when he got home with it
He found it was a yaffle.

Long words are strong words,
Easy on the eyes;
They make a man healthy,
Wealthy and wise.
Obmutescence, panicle,
Leave you feeling fine—
Run and get a dictionary,
One like mine!

BALLADE OF UNAPPRECIATED ART

It is commonly said that a saxophone's blat
Endows its creator with nothing but hate,
Yet I have known saxophone players, at that,
Whose home life was happy, whose ways were sedate;
I knew a pianist whose charm was so great
Unanimous townsmen elected him mayor,
Bass drummers the ladies are willing to date,
But nobody loves a harmonica player.

The windy cornetist, whose key is B-flat,
Annoys, but he seldom is given the gate;
The doughty trombonist who blows through a hat
Can find, as a rule, a desirable mate.
The fellow who tickles, both early and late,
The mad ukulele, grows constantly gayer,
With ne'er a policeman his muse to abate,
But nobody loves a harmonica player.

Alone in my boudoir full oft I have sat
And with my harmonica sought to create
A musical mood that was timely and pat,
To raise my tired soul to a happier state;
But somebody listened, and what was my fate? . . .
Ah me, as my locks become sparser and grayer,
I find it is idle the fact to debate
That nobody loves a harmonica player.

The piccolo squeaks like a pencil-rubbed slate,
The clarinet's often an asinine brayer,
The fiddle's encouraged to grumble and grate—
But nobody loves a harmonica player!

BALLADE OF THE WEARISOME WHEEZE

Of jokes I am always an eager consumer,
I like to chime in with a hearty guffaw,
And I stoutly contend that in matters of humor
There ought to be neither restriction nor law;
I enjoy just as much a decrepit old saw
As one that comes hot from the comicker's brain,
But one sort of whimsy sticks tight in my craw—
The joke about fingerbowls gives me a pain.

Of Pat-and-Mike gags I'm a strenuous boomer,
I think Scottish banter is bonnie and braw,
I stay the rash hand of the Ford-wheeze entomber
And save Jewish japes from oblivion's maw;
Comedians thrive on my merry haw-haw,
Though their ways may be dark and their tricks may be vain,
But there is a final, an ultimate straw—
The joke about fingerbowls gives me a pain.

A jest gets around with the swiftness of rumor,
It spreads with the speed of a midwinter thaw,
Takes root and becomes a perennial bloomer;
A joke's a dry bone that the humorists gnaw.
I laugh at it still, be it gentle or raw,
I hear it related, and never complain;
But once in a while I just groan and withdraw—
The joke about fingerbowls gives me a pain.

You say I am finicky? Nonsense and pshaw!
I even like comedy slightly insane.
In all of Joe Miller there's only one flaw—
The joke about fingerbowls gives me a pain.

BALLADE OF UNESSENTIAL NEWS

Hothouse grapes are a dollar a pound.
MARKET ITEM.

Feathers are worn at Palm Beach dances,
The kumquat crop is remarkably small,
England's navy is larger than France's,
There was a shortage of rain last fall,
Someone whose name I can't recall
Flatly denies the earth is round,
Ina Claire has a Spanish shawl
And hothouse grapes are a dollar a pound.

Science, beyond a doubt, advances,
Having found out why earthworms crawl;
Elinor Glyn's complete romances
Languish for sale in the second-hand stall;
The King of Denmark is seven feet tall
(These statistics are far from sound)
Skating is good around Saint Paul
And hothouse grapes are a dollar a pound.

A new golf season will bring new stances,
A certain show is rather a brawl,
People avid for taking chances
Gather again at Broad and Wall;
Various tendencies appal
Critics whose views are *so* profound,
Causing a loud, continuous squall—
And hothouse grapes are a dollar a pound.

Prince, does it matter, after all,
Whither the universe is bound?
Styles are changed by the tyrant Gaul,
And hothouse grapes are a dollar a pound.

SOLILOQUY FROM THE SECOND ACT

Somebody asks me: "What did she have on?"
And I begin to flounder and describe,
Not having noticed—and, perhaps, not cared.
I never learned the subtle difference
Between tan-beige and something in a gray,
Or between tailleur and, let's say, jacquette.
I do not say such things are trifles; rather
I know that men have fought and bled and died
Deciding what should be the season's vogue,
And that fair women have shed bitter tears
To find the skirt was one full inch too long.
Crowns have been lost, and empires undermined,
For things less weighty.
Yet I hem and haw,
Visualize, and struggle to remember,
And find at last that everything depends
Upon the lady.
Did she speak me fair
And murmur, "I have read your lovely verse"—
Quoting verbatim from the verse in question?

Then, being asked what sort of dress she wore,
I may declaim: "Oh, she was sweetly clad
In rainbow-colored gossamer, and shod
With nothing less than sandals of the dawn!"

Did she, upon the other hand, exclaim:
"I think you are too comical for words"?
Then I'll be less rhapsodic, and may say:
"I guess she wore the average kind of clothes,
Sort of a mother-hubbard proposition,
Yellow or brownish-green, I think it was."

All of which proves, if it proves anything,
Some women waste a lot of time and money
Dressing the outside, when the inside's bare.

SIDETRACKED

My shelves are full of Dickens' works
And those of Thackeray and Scott;
The books endorsed by learned clerks
Are just the books that I have got.
But, sitting down, my gaze I bend
Upon a plot that swiftly thickens
In some new tale, and that's the end
Of Dickens.

A handsome set of Gibbon's *Rome*,
One of Balzac and one of Poe,
Adorn my small but cultured home
And sit in an impressive row.
To find a passage I explore,
I mark it with a bit of ribbon,
And yawn a bit, and then no more
Of Gibbon.

The greatest minds of every age
Abide within my easy reach;

Their writings are profound and sage,
And I could cull the best of each,
But man is weak: I idly cast
A glance toward *The Crimson Vulture*,
Read the first page, and that's the last
Of Culture!

VARIUM ET MUTABILE

London concurs with Paris in restoring the full feminine figure. FASHION ITEM.

MAN, descended from the ape,
Never changes as to shape,
All his very best intentions
Cannot alter his dimensions;
Woman, from fair Eve descended,
Can be narrowed or extended,
Always in condition's pink,
She can bulge or she can shrink,
Take off here and put on there
To the measure of a hair.
Just for fun or on a bet
She can change her silhouette
Till her mother, when she spies her,
Almost fails to recognize her.

Paris thunders: "Girls, be thin!"
And the beanpole shape comes in;

London, in due course, observes:
"Ladies, it is time for curves."
And at once, no whit confounded,
Every gal is sweetly rounded.

Women are a fickle sex,
Now concave and now convex,
Sometimes tiny, sometimes bigger,
Fluctuating as to figger,
Watching, with respectful glance,
London, England; Paris, France.

WHEN I'M WITH YOU

What does it matter, dear, if Fate betray me,
Heal the old wounds, then open them anew?
There is sweet balm to comfort me and stay me
When I'm with you.

You are the spring that flows in desert places,
You are the fire that warms me through and through,
I see romance and faint, forgotten faces
When I'm with you.

Always within your eyes I can discover
Depths that are boundless, treasures that are new,
And draw contentment from your hands that hover,
When I'm with you.

Life is a plague of toiling and of fretting,
Life is a cup of black and bitter brew,
A nightmare I can only be forgetting
When I'm with you.

Life is a brawl, a thing of blows and curses . . .
But I, thank God, have better things to do
Than waste my time on pessimistic verses
When I'm with you!

LOVE LYRIC OF A DUFFER

Lady of the links, I fear me
I need lessons from a coach.
You're reluctant to be near me—
Something's wrong with my approach.

You're a well-instructed lassie,
Tell me what I ought to do—
Have I overplayed my brassie?
Have I failed to follow through?

This uncertainty is gruesome;
Answer, please, my plaintive cry—
What's the matter with our twosome?
Is my handicap too high?

Pardon, lady, my persistence,
But I *must* improve my score;
I'm a rotten judge of distance—
Did I hear you holler: "Fore"?

True, there's nothing I can teach you,
Stance or grip or all such stuff,
But I beg you and beseech you,
Just don't leave me in the rough!

Hooks and slices have pursued me,
I've been stymied day and night—
Won't you, dear, at least include me
In the consolation flight?

THE NOTARY PUBLIC

I'd rather be a public notary
Than join the Elks, or even Rotary;
The title has a legal air
And lends a sort of *savoir-faire,*
It is a quasi-public job
That lifts a man above the mob.
The notary puts out his sign,
And says: "No, no; the other line,"
Uses his seal a time or two,
And that is all he has to do.
He can attain his lofty station
Without a legal education,
Expensive quarters, stylish dress,
Or shrewd political finesse.

Were there no notary close by,
Society would droop and die
And commerce would grow limp and lax.
We could not pay the income tax,
Sign instruments and depositions,
Or even circulate petitions!

It gives encouragement and cheer
To know that one is always near
To see that everything is fair
And stand beside us when we swear.
If I were one, it seems to me,
The honor were sufficient fee!

THE RADIO ANNOUNCER

A RADIO announcer's days
Are filled with diphthongs and broad A's,
His nights are full of recitations
And difficult pronunciations.
He must enunciate Tschaikowsky
And Paderewski and Godowsky,
And if one consonant he misses
His fan mail brings him jeers and hisses;
He must give art and soul-appeal
To Diffendorfer's Pickled Veal,
And touch the hearts of listening fans
With Ginsberg's Gorgeous Garbage Cans.
He cannot win with charm and grace,
For no one ever sees his face,
And so he has to hold his job
With nothing but a vocal throb.
If he should get his facts confused
He will be censured and abused,
While, if his errors come to nil,
Men say he lacks dramatic skill.

He has no fun, he has no choice,
He's but a disembodied Voice,
Cut off from the enraptured gaze
Of goofy girls at matinées.
I'd rather fight a dance-hall bouncer
Than be a radio announcer!

THE PIANO TUNER

I LIKE my job, but I would sooner
Be cast as a piano tuner,
The kind of man who understands
The temperaments of baby grands,
Whose earnest, scientific labors
Bring joy to all his clients' neighbors
And substitute harmonic joys
For fifty-seven kinds of noise.
Piano tuners ride in Fords
To rectify eccentric chords
Or to improve a sour cadenza
That's popular as influenza;
To any concert or recital
They're indispensable and vital—
Without an instrument in key,
Where, pray, would Josef Hofmann be?
Piano tuners work, it's said,
With hardly any overhead;
Their chief equipment, so I hear,
Is but a well-adjusted ear,

Which notifies them—*zip !*—like that
If any note's unduly flat.
They need no helper for their tools
And hence are free from union rules;
They're not affected by the tariff,
They're in no danger from the sheriff;
To all the finest homes they go
And by the hour play la-si-do.
If I had boys, and not sopranos,
I'd have them taught to tune pianos!

THE SALESMAN

The super-salesman is a guy
With glittering, hypnotic eye,
Who comes when you are feeling sour
And calls upon you by the hour.
If you pretend you're glad you've met, it
Is ten to one that you'll regret it,
But if you're mean and lay him flat,
You'll probably repent of that.
He finds you down to one thin dime
And takes ten dollars' worth of time
To tell you what a fool you'll be
If you don't buy immediately.
No argument that you may raise
Can stop the tune the salesman plays,
Your alibis he deems a bore,
Because he's heard them all before.
His sales talk is a lethal knife,
He gets your order or your life,
He leaves you pale and weak and gaunt,
He sells you something you don't want,

Then, having made his local quota,
He takes the train for North Dakota
(Using your money for his fare)
And makes another quota there!

THE ECONOMIST

High on the intellectual list
We find the great Economist,
Who seven days a week advises,
Capitulates, and analyzes.
Without emerging from his lair
Or moving from his easy chair,
He can inform the cockeyed orb
How much rye flour it will absorb,
And give the acreage of hay
For 1910 in Paraguay.
The nation's progress he defines
Upon large charts with dotted lines;
He knows how much the people spend,
And lays statistics end to end.
He pictures, in his lighter moods,
The future of herbaceous foods;
His skill survives the hardest test—
The little trick that he does best
Is to explain, to farm and town,
Why stock and bonds are up or down.

If they are low, he can descry
Good reasons why they should be high;
If they are high, he likes to show
Proof that they really should be low,
Knowing that time, in constant flight,
Eventually will prove him right.
He'll say he told you all along—
Economists are never wrong.

EXCELSIOR!

Observe how poetry has grown—
It used to be too highbrow
When ragged poets would intone
Odes to a lady's eyebrow.
To-day they earn a higher wage
And have a broader scope;
They warble on the printed page
    Of gasoline
    And vaseline
    And soap.

Observe how painting, too, has come
To standing and position;
Art is no longer on the bum,
But has a glorious mission.
Instead of ordinary nudes
Or landscapes full of trees,
The painter works on breakfast foods,
    Refrigerators,
    Percolators,
    Cheese.

The men who labor to express
Their souls' important yearnings
Are glad that progress deigns to bless
Their skill with larger earnings;
Likewise they cannot but rejoice
That topics multiply,
Giving their hard-worked muses choice
    Of garter ads,
    Self-starter ads
    And pie.

DISILLUSIONED

I've abandoned the practice of reading,
Since all that is written to-day
Puts over a press agent's pleading
In a subtle, insidious way.
E.g., the last novel I stayed with all night
Was just propaganda for love at first sight.

An expert on public relations
Has hired all the slaves of the pen,
And tells all the best publications
Just what they should publish, and when.
If a joke makes you laugh till you think you will
bust,
It was likely inspired by the pants-button trust.

The fictional gems that inspire you
In even the best magazines
Are really intended to fire you
With zeal to buy bathtubs or beans;
And the various poems entitled "To Spring"
May be propaganda for any old thing.

You may read, if you want to grow wiser,
But be careful, whatever you do,
And let no sly proselytizer
Put anything over on you.
Just say, when you come to the end of a book:
"He's clever at that, the press-agenting crook!"

COMMISSARY REPORT

Our fathers were fellows of substance and weight,
They drank when they drank, and they ate when they ate,
They made a light breakfast of flapjacks and pie,
They greeted corned beef with a ravenous cry,
Their luncheon was spareribs, with beans on the side—
They lived free and equal,
And what was the sequel?
They died.

The men of our era are timid with food,
Their principal ration is calories, stewed,
They start off the morning with prune flakes and bran
And patented mannas,
And shredded bananas—
They get a whole meal from a single tin can.

They keep a keen eye on the vitamin chart,
Affect fancy diets, and know them by heart,
They pick at their food like a wren or a chick
  For fear they'll get cancer,
  And what is the answer?
They're sick.

THE HACK WRITER'S CHILD IS SUNG TO SLEEP

Lullaby, baby, and sweet be your dreams,
Gentle your sleep as the song of a bird;
Tell me your thoughts when the morrow's sun gleams,
Daddy will sell them for five cents a word.
Lullaby, baby,
Cling close to your poppy,
Nothing can beat you for salable copy.

Lullaby, little one, ended is day,
Rest for a while from your innocent playing,
Dream of cute things you will presently say,
Daddy can place them at so much a saying.
Lullaby, baby,
Bye-low, my honey,
Mother needs stockings, and stockings cost money.

Lullaby, baby, and while you're asleep
Daddy will write you some whimsical verses,
Let the nice editors read them and weep,
Send us some money to put in our purses.
  Lullaby, baby,
  Dream through the night,
Daddy will watch you, for Daddy must write!

THE HALCYON DAYS

When I was young, and winter came
(With spring not far behind)
In many a youthful outdoor game
I occupied my mind.
The memories of that happy state
Should thrill me, but do not;
What really lingers in my pate
Is, when I sallied forth to skate,
How cold my tootsies got.

When I was young, and girls were sweet
(There's none to match them now)
I'd meet them on the village street
And fetch an awkward bow.
I should recall their smiles that made
My young heart glow and melt,
But memory is a fickle jade;
She tells me only, I'm afraid,
How like an ass I felt.

The days of youth were golden days,
On golden wings that passed;

They also were—how runs the phrase?—
Too beautiful to last.
And, since I've no desire to scold
Or leave tradition flat,
Admitting all that I've been told,
I'll say that they were days of gold,
And let it go at that.

THE CRITIC WHO TURNED

A CRITIC who wrote about music and drama
For a large metropolitan sheet,
And turned out a survey of art's panorama
Consistently bright and complete,
Came back to his desk from a concert one night
And took out his pencil and started to write:

"A splendid performance was given
By the crowd in the orchestra seats,
Their coughing was clearer,
Their sneezing sincerer
Than ever before,
They stuck close to the score,
Their whispers were musical treats.
The ones who came late
(Which was all but a few)
Did some work that was great
As they crashed their way through.
Their jiggles
And wiggles
And sniggles
Were the best that the season has brought,

And the various ushers,
Attendants and shushers
Were wholly outplayed and outfought.
In spite of the loud interruptions
Of a couple of people who sang,
The audience battled
With programs that rattled,
And carried it off with a bang.
The janitor, too, whom I wish to commend,
Made the steam pipes resound from beginning to
end."

Then the critic retired for a fortnight of rest,
Feeling very much better, with this off his chest.

SOMETHING TO WORRY ABOUT

Could I bear the ills of life,
All its bickering and strife,
All its load of rule and law,
If there were no wood to saw?
Could I struggle through the maze
Of interminable days,
Cope with suffering and ache,
If there were no rocks to break?
Could I, if there were no toil,
Such as delving in the soil,
Plumbing and piano-moving
(Tiresome jobs, but so improving!)
Ever manage to endure
Life, at best no sinecure?

There are people, I have heard,
Who consider work absurd,
Who profess to garner pleasure
From uninterrupted leisure,
And, with soft and languid eye,
Loaf, and let the world go by.

Can so indolent a crew
Feel the joys that workers do?
Should I, as the phrase is, spoin them
Or be envious to join them?
Is my present happy lot
Due to industry, or not?
This is my most grievous woe—
Probably I'll never know.

SERVICE

Far away in lovely Paris,
In a dark, secluded room,
Is a man who toils and suffers
To invent a new perfume.
Labor, art, and perseverance
Dominate that hermit cell,
That the world may be the richer
For a sweet, distinctive smell.
And the end of this man's effort
Is a rare and precious drop
To impart sophistication
To Miss Wilhelmina Klopp.

On an ancient street in London
Lives a man whose lifelong care
Is designing coats and trousers
For the well-dressed gent to wear
He renounces social pleasure,
He is deaf to wealth and rank,
Striving to create a weskit
With the proper touch of swank.

His reward is full and lasting
If a garment he can plot
That will make J. Wesley Higgins
Look like Willie-off-the-yacht.

Hail the man a modern hero, crown the woman as a saint,
Who can make us common people seem like something that we ain't!

ALL WRONG

Poetry is funny
Judged by any test;
Those who write for money
Seem to write the best.
Bards whose avocation
Bids them sit apart,
Waiting inspiration,
Never get a start.

Poetry is crazy,
Seen through any eyes;
Stanzas dim and hazy
Always win the prize.
Clear and lucid verses,
Quickly understood,
Earn the critics' curses,
Aren't any good.

Poetry's the maddest
Business that I know;
Youngsters write the saddest,
Revel most in woe,

Older bards are jolly,
Hear the pipes of Pan—
Poetry is folly,
Cure it if you can!

SINK TROUBLE

It is now generally agreed that kitchen sinks should be ornamental.

TRADE NEWS ITEM.

I FEEL dejected, sad, and punk
To see how low the sink has sunk;
It puts on lavender and pink
And is no more an honest sink.

I doubt that Providence designed
The kitchen sink to be refined;
It's not the grand piano's twin,
But something to wash dishes in.

And since by Fate's benign intent
A sink should be no ornament,
It must be checked by labor's leash
And kept from being *nouveau riche.*

Oh, it would blight the happiest home
To have a sink in polychrome!

And it would wreck the stoutest heart
To see a kitchen full of Art.

Though prettiness all else immure,
We ought to keep the kitchen pure,
And not conspire with brush and ink
To find how low a sink can sink!

WITH RESERVATIONS

I'LL go a-fishing, reserving the right
To read a good book if the fishes don't bite;
I'll go a-fishing, of course understood
I can quit cold if my luck isn't good.
  I may go to sleep
  On the top of a dam,
For that is the kind of a fisher I am.

I'll go a-fishing, but never arrayed
Like the head of the lodge in a Shriners' parade;
I'll go a-fishing in regular pants
And give the poor fishes a Chinaman's chance.
  I'll stay in the cabin
  And slice the cold ham,
For that is the kind of an angler I am.

I'll go a-fishing with hooks or bent pins,
But not in cold rivers that freeze a man's shins;
I'll spend my money for what money buys,
Excepting a carload of spinners and flies.
  I think fancy tackle
  Is mostly a sham,
And that is the kind of a sportsman I am.

I will come home with the fish that I catch,
But I won't set to cleaning the hideous batch;
I'll even eat them, and thus avoid waste—
Reserving the right to object to the taste.
  But I'd really much rather
  Eat lobster or clam,
And that is the kind of a fisher I am!

The Late Stoddard King

Death of a Good Columnist.

From the Portland Oregonian: Stoddard King, columnist, has given up the job, and he won't be writing "Facetious Fragments" for the Spokane Spokesman-Review ever again.

It makes us all feel sorry, because he was a good columnist—these be rare, indeed—and a real friend with a gift of fine laughter. They made books of his laughing verses, the publishers did, just as those verses were clipped from the daily paper, wherein they were long his assignment. The books sold widely and well. For Stoddard King was that rarity of journalistic letters, a good columnist, and when you find a good columnist he shall stand before kings.

You'll be remembering a song that he wrote when he was a young fellow at Yale. He wrote it for a fraternity celebration, and later on somebody wrote music for it, and the soldiers chanted it who were about to die. The song is called "There's a Long, Long Trail." It is a good song, too, and clean as a morning breeze, for the reason that he knew not how to write another sort.

Somewhere in his book, "What the Queen Said," is a poem to the Old Men of Melody who give songs, of their great favor, to wistful poets that lack. Even to newspaper columnists, if such are good craftsmen and merry, that must write in haste at the need of the insatiate presses.

In the interstellar spaces where the cosmic breezes blow,
The Old Men of Melody are sitting in a row,
And there is music sweeter than the finest violins,
When the wind stirs the whiskers on the Old Men's chins.

He'll be saying good morning to them now, to the wonderful Old Men that keep the music of words—and have they a rime for this, it being the least trifle difficult, or another rime for that? Of course, they will have rimes for a first-rate columnist. But nothing that he rimes hereafter will ever make the edition. We ought, however, to be glad that Stoddard King wrote for so long a while, and so like himself, before he went away.

VOICES

The road calls and the sea calls,
The mountains whisper low,
By day and night I hear the voice
That bids me rise and go;
But louder than the murmuring pines
Or the great waves flecked with foam
Is the siren call of the overdraft
That bids me stay at home.

The trail calls, the river calls,
And over the hills I hear
A mystic cry that ever rings
Like music in my ear;
But another sound more near at hand
Than rivers or lakes or hills
Says: "Maybe you'd like to wander, lad,
But who's to pay the bills?"

I want to answer the road's call
And go with the gypsy folk,
But the wanderlust's terms are C. O. D.,
And this little pig is broke.

The hills can call till they're hoarse, I guess,
And the woods can fairly bray—
Their cry of "Come" is a waste of time
When the cash in the sock says: "Stay!"

BALLADE IN COLD WEATHER

(Using the reverse English on W. E. Henley's well-known hot-weather poem.)

Hot dogs and hot tamales,
A roaring open fire,
Hot shows, e.g., the Follies,
Hot pipes, both steam and briar,
Countries where men perspire
Despite the shade of trees
And the sun's rays are dire—
To live, I think of these.

Firecrackers' ringing volleys,
A blazing, crackling pyre,
Beasts with long hair, like collies,
Proof against Boreas' ire;
All sorts of warm attire
Reaching from neck to knees,
John Barleycorn, Esquire—
To live, I think of these.

The heated seats on trolleys,
Vesuvius' smoking spire,
The sunburned brown Bengalis
Within their tropic shire;
The colors of desire—
Flame, crimson and cerise—
Without them I'd expire;
To live, I think of these.

I tune my frosted lyre
To scorching symphonies,
Flames that mount high and higher—
To live, I think of these.

ART MODERNE

Only a dullard or a rogue
Would slight the modernistic vogue;
Only a person dead at heart
Resist the latest thing in art.
  My heart leaps up when I behold
  A cubist chandelier,
  Compact of crystal and of gold—
  How angular, how dear!
It is a blessing to the nerves
To see no more distracting curves
  In dressing table,
  Parlor chair,
  In sideboard, desk,
  Or kitchen sink,
  But angles, angles everywhere,
  Nor any drop to drink!

My heart is shattered into shards
By futuristic greeting cards,
I thrill to catch the overtones
Of post-Picasso ice cream cones,

In modern homes I can deduce
The square of the hypotenuse
And joyfully eat eggs and ham
From cube and parallelogram.

It is exciting thus to lend
Hot interest to the newest trend;
And yet, one has to cry Alas!
To think that even this must pass,
That what is modern art this week
Will, next semester, be antique,
And quite forgotten in a year! . . .
Excuse a polyhedral tear.

LINES IN DOCILITY

I HEED what printed slogans say
And do things on the proper day,
I buy my winter's coal and wood
When some committee says I should;
I try to be my children's pal
Just when the paper says I shall;
Like all the others in our block,
I love my mother by the clock;
Mine not to ask a deeper reason—
I toe the mark for every season.

How foolish it would be, how vain,
For me to struggle and complain!
Greater and wiser men decide
When I should take a steamship ride,
Or buy insurance on my life,
Or send some posies to my wife.
They meet and talk such matters o'er
In Boston or in Baltimore,
And with benevolence decree
Exactly what is best for me.

They plan my diet and my dress,
They rescue me from the distress,
The labor misdirected, blind,
Involved in making up my mind.
And in return, my thanks I give
That I can be appreciative
And in such grateful manner fare
As to deserve this loving care.

GREEN GIRL

Deep emerald green is the newest shade for smart finger nails. PARIS ITEM.

Dearest, I loved your eyes of blue,
So bashfully cast down;
I loved your golden tresses, too,
(I love them now they're brown)
I loved your orange-crimson lips,
Like other ardent males,
And now I love your finger tips
With lovely grass-green nails.

Last Whitsuntide your nails were red,
For red was smart and new,
And at the time 'twas freely said
That next they would be blue;
But fashion took a sudden swerve
Which could not be foreseen,
And now with rapture I observe
That part of you is green.

Variety is woman's charm,
Her trump card in the game,
And it would do her tactics harm
To keep them all the same;
Wherefore she goes from green to pink,
Chameleon as to hue—
And yet I shan't regret, I think,
To have your eyes stay blue!

JUST TO BE DIFFERENT

O PANSY, blooming in the snow,
Conspicuously out of season,
Your stunt annoys me, though I know
It's done for quite a modern reason;
Your brash, unorthodox début
Is—I anticipate confession—
Wholly and absolutely due
To a desire for self-expression.

O robin, perching on a limb
When nights, to say the least, are coolish,
I'll not regard your wit as dim
Or call your chilly chirping foolish.
Whether upon a bough you sit
Or on an icicle's bright prism,
You are, I'm willing to admit,
Showing your individualism.

For this is just the sort of age
To make that sort of thing appealing;
To be advanced, one must engage
In eccentricity of dealing.

And various human freaks, I guess,
Who ride to death their private Dobbins,
Appeal to me a whole lot less
Than snowbound flowers, or winter robins.

POOR PAPA

I THINK I could forgive a man
Who spoke such words as "Tush" and "Bother,"
And wished that life had ceased its span
Ere ever he became a father,
If he had read the sort of ad
That speaks a word for "Good Old Dad."

The picture shows him bald and fat
(As, to be sure, some fathers are)
Wearing an obvious gift cravat,
Smoking a blatant gift cigar,
And beaming broadly, all the while,
With the most fatuous kind of smile.

The father that the ads create
Is hardly an attractive chap;
From slippered feet to shining pate
He's but a simple-minded sap,
Whose womenfolk (the ad says) ought
To give him an occasional thought.

How can a fellow so lampooned
Hold up his head and stand erect?
Thus condescendingly cartooned
How can he keep his self-respect?
I wonder, as I pen these words,
Why fathers are not rarer birds.

WASTED AMMUNITION

Our masters of satire are vigorous gents,
They devastate folly, and shatter pretense,
And they should have succeeded, by all of the rules,
In freeing this country of bumpkins and fools;
Their shafts of derision should slay on the spot,
But do they, dear Brutus?
Apparently not.

No satire was ever more clever and keen
Than that which is launched at the cinema screen,
And players, producers, press agents and mobs
Should, long before this, have been bumped from
their jobs;
They should have surrendered, or started to fly—
Hast heard of it, Socrates?
Neither have I.

Society dowagers, prize-fighting blokes,
Have all been assailed by satirical jokes;

The lions that rule the political zoo
And the barons of business are satirized, too.
How they can survive it we writers can't see—
Come, what do you make of it, Watson?
By me!

GENTLY, BUT FIRMLY

Little Boy Blue, come blow your horn
(A Boy Scout bugle, your grandfather's gift)
Under my window at early morn,
Shorter than short will be your shrift.
Pucker your lips and puff your cheeks,
Fill your lungs with the morning air,
Someone will paddle your nice new breeks,
And just who does it I don't much care.

The sound of a horn, my precious lad,
Is sweet in the depths of a bosky wood,
Up in the hills it's not so bad,
But ours is a populous neighborhood.
We are glad that you want to blow
Stirring airs of a martial kind,
But try to practise them sweet and low,
And late in the day, if you don't mind.

Don't consider me mean and sour,
Or take my words as a darksome threat,
But bugle calls at an early hour
Will hardly make you the local pet.

Keep right on bugling, loud and strong,
When the grass is wet with the morning dew,
And your grieving parents will wonder long
What has become of their Little Boy Blue.

THE ALTRUIST

When coffee, in the bean or ground,
Goes down to forty cents a pound,
I'm apt to worry, late at night,
About the coffee growers' plight.

When sugar, which has been too high,
Gets cheaper, do I laugh? Not I—
Instead of making merry banter,
I fret about the sugar planter.

When lard, or beef, or turpentine,
Suffers a marketwise decline,
I ponder, and it makes me blue,
What the producer must go through.

He toils at bench, or plow, or loom,
While all that I do is consume;
And every time I save a cent
His back in penury is bent.

I should be selfish and unkind
To bar his problems from my mind,

Or to ignore his poignant pains
For my inconsequential gains.

So, when I purchase things from clerks,
I think about the man who works,
And wonder, at odd times, if he
Is as solicitous of me.

SONNETS

I

Low in the sky there hangs a glimmering star,
A single jewel on the breast of night,
Lastingly brilliant, beautifully white,
Teasingly near, immeasurably far.
Earthbound, we cry: "How fortunate you are,
Remote from human weaknesses and spite,
Calm and aloof in your celestial height,
Free from all things that devastate or scar!"

Poets are nuisances. They talk like that
When we all know, or think we know, at least,
That the bright star which shines serenely there
May be a world like ours, where jokes are flat
And shoes unshined, and trousers seldom creased,
And cackling fools drive sages to despair!

II

"Travel in style this summer," say the ads,
With pretty pictures of their tours de luxe,
Gayer than Whitcomb's, costlier than Cook's,
Picturing slender girls and well-groomed lads

Cutting a dash (the high finance is dad's),
Sitting at ease in Continental nooks,
Jitney aristocrats from story books,
Languid collectors of fantastic fads.

They will play bridge upon the seven seas,
They will play bridge at Naples, I suppose,
At Canterbury and at Mozambique.
I'd rather go upon my hands and knees,
And, with the ground adjacent to my nose,
Patiently push a peanut up Pikes Peak.

III

I cannot understand how poets dare
To fall in love, for surely they must know
They'll be done dirt. They haven't got a show
As long as femmes are fickle, frail, and fair.
I cannot understand. One gets the air,
And takes the count, and that's the way things go.
It's wrong, but Providence has willed it so,
And all good poems reek of dark despair.

Tired business men can win the heart and hand
Of any dame they happen to desire;
They fan the tiniest spark to roaring fire.
Poets lose out . . . I cannot understand
Why they continue thus to grieve and pine
For, on the average, fifty cents a line!

GUARDIAN ANGELS

When in my little bed I lie,
I close a calm, unworried eye,
For kindly men I seldom see
Are busy taking care of me.

While I in gentle sleep relax,
They think up some new kind of tax
So that I never need go through
The pains of being well-to-do.

They labor in the noisy town
To make the price of stocks go down,
They rush about and wilt their collars,
That I may lose eleven dollars.

Free from all sordid thoughts of self,
They clear the haberdasher's shelf,
So that the hat I hold so dear
Will be unfashionable next year.

They gather, heedless of expense,
And raise the price of gas two cents;

It is so good of them, so kind,
To take this burden from my mind.

In peace and comfort I abide
And have no problems to decide;
Big men my destinies dispose—
The philanthropic so-and-so's!

THE WINKLE SAGA

The winkle-picking championship has been awarded. ENGLISH PAPER.

FITTEST far of all survivals
Were the winkle-picking rivals
Whom in fame we're glad to link—
Mr. Wickle, Mr. Pink.

Mr. Pink's cognomen tinkles
Through the history of winkles,
Mr. Wickle's name goes ticking
Down the corridors of picking.

When they met in competition,
Papers held the last edition;
Crowds, notoriously fickle,
Cheered for Pink and cheered for Wickle.

Wickle winked, and Pink was tickled
At the gate receipts that trickled,
Every nickel with a tick—
But the winkles, they felt sick.

Then the winkle-picking started,
Winkles load by load they carted
Where, beneath the spotlight's flicker,
Sat each wicked winkle-picker.

Click! the kodaks went at Wickle,
Who was chewing hunks of chicle,
And the movie camera's wink
Caught the pickle-eating Pink.

Here, for highbrow or for hick,
Was the newest sporting trick,
Competition's latest wrinkles—
Pink and Wickle picking winkles!

THE POOR EXPLORER

The bold explorer, when he goes
To climates rather cool than tepid,
In lands among the polar snows,
Is, as he always was, intrepid.
Yet, be his pole the South or North,
He takes so many crates and barrels
That it appears he sallies forth
To face a newer kind of perils.

His airplanes and his radio sets
Must be in excellent condition
To overcome the arctic's threats
And carry out his glorious mission.
He has to take along, of course,
A hardy crew of cooks and waiters,
Also a large and able force
Of motion picture operators.

Thus he progresses to his goal
With up-to-date accommodations,
And ultimately finds the pole
Without the orthodox privations.

But danger still his peace can mar,
For radio tubes are fond of breaking,
And opening tins of caviar
May be a risky undertaking!

HISTORY OF THE CASE

Jones was down with typhoid,
And his demise was sure,
But a clever doctor saved him
With a brand-new typhoid cure.

His liver next assailed him
With all-but-mortal ills,
But science pulled him through, with
The latest liver pills.

Then spinal meningitis
Attacked his fragile frame;
A just-discovered serum
His rescuer became.

His heart was beating badly,
But that was righted, when
A skillful surgeon fixed it
And put it back again.

No malady so deadly,
No germ so swift to blight,

But that the brisk physicians
Could put it straight to flight.

At this point exit science,
At this point enter luck . . .
Jones' end was swift and sudden
Beneath a grocery truck.

THAT'S NEWS

"Vanderbilts Are Reconciled."
HEADLINE.

In the villas of Newport, Rhode Island,
There is calm;
And peace rests on lowland and highland
Like a balm.
Sweet brotherhood broods o'er the tea and the cake,
For the cruel war's over, and everything's jake.

The word flies to France and Great Britain:
"All is well!"
Ecstatic dispatches are written
To dispel
The sorrowful clouds that were lately so dense
When the Vanderbilts sulked in their, so to speak, tents.

There is joy in the workingman's cottage
For a while;

Poor people sit down to their pottage
With a smile.
Our hearts are contented, that erstwhile did ache,
For Papa loves Mama, and everything's jake!

HIGHER THINGS

Song or story, dance or play,
Tragic tale or merry jest,
In this bright, efficient day,
Has to meet a certain test.
Trying is the writer's task,
Drooping his artistic wing,
When the earnest seekers ask:
"Does it TEACH us anything?"

Though with wings the phrases fly,
Though with skill the actors move,
Someone's pretty sure to cry:
"What, precisely, does it prove?"
Vain are charm and style and wit,
Episodes with genius fraught,
If the author must admit
That no noble lesson's taught.

Life's a solemn rigmarole,
Something useful must be done;
Self-improvement is our goal,
Never, for a moment, fun.

Culture is a sacred rite—
All together, let us sing,
Eagerly, with eyes alight:
"Does it TEACH us anything?"

THE FATAL VOWEL

Betty wore pajamas
And thought that she was smart—
The silk was Yokohama's,
From Paris came the art;
Betty had a dozen sets
And thought a lot of each.
She wore them in the boudoir
And wore them at the beach.
She wore them doing housework—
A notion of her mamma's—
Wherever you saw Betty,
There you saw pajamas.
Pink ones at breakfast,
Purple ones at tea,
Something else at bedtime—
Don't ask me!
Stripes at the bridge table,
Scene of social dramas,
All sorts of neat effects,
But everywhere pajamas.

Betty went a-summering,
Swagger and swell,
Took her pajamas
To a ritzy hotel;
Other ladies viewed her
With a fishy eye—
All their PYJAMAS
Were spelled with a "Y!"
Even the hired help
Stared at her and rubbered—
Betty came right home
And bought a mother hubbard!

CAREERS

If I were a Mexican peon,
I'd never touch gin or vermouth,
But I'd emulate Ponce de Leon
By seeking the water of youth,
And I'd sell it to tourists
And traveling jurists
While seated at ease in a booth.

If I were a Muscovite moujik
And subject to soviet rule,
I'd cultivate plants febrifugic
Of the old homeopathist school,
And I'd cure all the Russians
Of pains and concussions
By keeping their arteries cool.

If I were a peasant in Finland,
I'd never do manual toil,
But I'd seek a location well inland
And drill for a showing of oil.
I'd quickly diminish
The funds of the Finnish
And move to Palm Beach with my spoil.

If I were an Austrian baron,
Deprived of my ancient estate,
I'd call myself Angus McLaren
And charge a phenomenal rate
To teach a rich lassie
The use of the brassie,
And take twenty pounds off her weight.

CULTURE AND HORTICULTURE

To RAISE a fine garden
Is harder than it looks;
Still, you can do it, if
You have enough books.
Books on perennials,
Roses and shrubs,
Landscape architecture,
How to kill grubs.

Mine is the best plan
(Begging your pardon)
I keep my library
Out in the garden;
I've got a bookcase
Painted bright red,
Right between the lilies and
The salpiglossis bed.

When I get to wondering
What comes next,
All I have to do is
To thumb the proper text;

I can study pruning,
Fertilizer, bugs,
Without running in the house
And tracking up the rugs.

Gardening is much more
Than putting in seed;
You have got to have a
Library to read.
Get a lot of books, with
Bindings that are strong,
Keep them in the back yard,
Where they belong!

TO AN APHIS

You taunt me and defy me
Through summer's friendly days,
Though desperately I buy me
The most expensive sprays.
Vexatiously you try me
Until my tonsure grays.

Among my choicest roses
You work with evil zest;
Your family, goodness knows, is
A most unwelcome guest,
And if the gardener dozes
You penalize his rest.

So wee, and yet so horrid!
So tiny, yet so strong!
My language waxes torrid,
I sing no happy song,
But mop my streaming forehead
And spray the whole day long.

Yet mine the final chortle—
Go eat your wretched leaf!
Though both of us are mortal
Your life is much more brief,
And when YOU pass the portal
There'll be no signs of grief!

THE NATURE LOVER

On mornings that are fair and bland,
Between the April show-ers,
I love to wander through the land
And, with appreciative hand,
To pluck the wilder flow-ers.
(The farmer, when he sees my car,
Is wilder than the posies are.)

I love to pluck the buttercup
With little dewdrops wet,
I'm also good at picking up,
Where nature's raised it from a pup,
The dogtooth vi-o-let.
(Though often, to my great chagrin,
I get a dog tooth in my shin.)

I like to stroll o'er hill and dale
Where someone keeps a ranch,
Ignoring signs of "Eggs for Sale,"
And, standing on a shaky rail,
Detach a flowering branch.

(If interrupted, I can run
Before the rancher loads his gun.)

The beauties of the vernal scene
Delight my roving eye,
The soft expanse of gentle green
Enchants me with its silken sheen
Beneath a smiling sky
That seems to beckon and beguile.
(I wish the peasantry would smile!)

THE SIMPLE LIFE

I LIVE in Arcady, in Arden,
That is, I cultivate my garden
And, aided by a coat of tan,
Become a great big outdoor man.
I can distinguish—well, not quite—
The cypripedium at sight,
And I can tell in just which bed
The antirrhinum rears its head.
Instead of tinkering with the car
And wondering where the spark plugs are,
Sound horticulture I promote
With some good humus anecdote.
Instead of playing games of cards
I visit other people's yards
And make well-simulated fusses
Over their fine ranunculuses.
I do not trouble to invade
The so-called busy marts of trade
Where men engage in mortal fray
To take each other's cash away.
When to my care a shrub responds,
It means far more than stocks or bonds,

And lilium americanum
Surpasses six per cent per annum.
For company I have with me
Eleven kinds of aphidæ,
And, further to discourage sloth,
A colony of codlin-moth.
Lastly, when sunset brings the dark,
I keep alive the social spark
By entertaining, now and then,
Big buttercup-and-eggplant men.

MOURNFUL NUMBERS

Once I could calculate
Square and cubic feet,
Paper any given room
And make ends meet;
Once I could keep track
Of A's and B's affairs,
Giving all participants
What was rightly theirs.
Now I can't do it—
I'm duller, I'm afraid
Than when I was a little lad
In the seventh grade

Busy teachers taught me
How to read and spell,
Also how to calculate
The contents of a well.
I could find the area
Of any shape of field,
I knew what interest
At eight per cent would yield.

Glibly I rattled off
Each and every rule—
When I was a little boy
And had to go to school.

I was hot and bothered,
Frequently confused,
Learning hard formulas
That I've never used;
Manfully I labored
Scaling cords of wood,
Dutifully slaving
As a pupil should.
Now I've lapsed to ignorance,
Still at times I glow,
Proud of all the fine things
That I used to know!

OLD-FASHIONED DITTY

A GRAYBEARD of uncertain age,
I like to sit and muse
And think about the mellow scenes
that memory renews,
I like to think about the days
when work was done by hand
And not by slick machinery that
a man can't understand.
The humble cot wherein I live
has sockets in the wall,
To each of which some tool we hitch
to serve our beck and call;
That these are swell contraptions there
can be no shade of doubt—
Excepting on occasions when
the
fuse
blows
out.

It's wonderful to realize
that all our daily chores

Are done by shiny gadgets that
we purchase at the stores,
That women need no longer slave
away from sun to sun—
They simply push a button, and
their daily toil is done.
But always in the background there's
a little bit of dread,
A hint of coming trouble
that hangs above our head,
For the house is full of wiring that
we cannot do without,
And we feel so kind of helpless when
the
fuse
blows
out!

ROLLICKING STAVE

(Sung by Uncle Abijah on his sixty-seventh birthday.)

When I was young and in my teens,
  Ti-diddledy-i-de-o,
I thought that all the girls were queens,
  Tiddledy-i-de-o.
And now I'm old and ready to quit,
I'll make just one remark, to wit:
My notions haven't changed a bit,
  Tiddledy-i-de-o.

When I was young and full of spring,
  Ti-diddledy-i-de-o,
I'd sit up late at night and sing,
  Tiddledy-i-de-o.
And now my voice is not so strong,
But when the crowd is given to song
I cackle my durnedest all night long,
  Tiddledy-i-de-o.

When I was supple in all my joints,
Ti-diddledy-i-de-o,
I'd argue all disputed points,
Tiddledy-i-de-o.
Now I'm old and a trifle slow,
But when an argument starts to grow,
Get me started, and off I go,
Tiddledy-i-de-o.

The moral of the song I've sung,
Ti-diddledy-i-de-o,
Is, form your tastes while you are young,
Tiddledy-i-de-o.
And when your youth is left behind,
I'll bet a dollar that you will find
You'll seldom have to change your mind,
Tiddledy-i-de-o!

ADVANCE ANNOUNCEMENT

I'M THINKING of writing a novel
That the critics are bound to acclaim,
That will add large amounts to my fiscal accounts
And win me the laurel of fame.
It won't be a story of action,
For action is likely to pall—
To insure a wide sale it will be a long tale
Wherein nothing happens at all.

This novel I'm thinking of writing
Will deal with a family group,
And will show with great pains the dull state of
their brains
By the way they ingurgitate soup.
Through pages of dull conversation
Between stupid husbands and wives
(And an uncle or so) I'll endeavor to show
The futility, plus, of their lives.

For that is the fashion in fiction—
It's permanent, likely as not—

The critics raise Cain if an author's so vain
As to burden his book with a plot.
My novel, I'm sure, will delight them,
In spite of its absence of wit,
For they've all set the stage for the Book of the
Age
Where the people do nothing but sit!

THE GYPSY AND THE POET

A GYPSY's life was a merry one
When the roads were wide and free,
And he hit the track with his gypsy pack
As gay as a man could be.
He could hike along at his own sweet will
Far from the city's pale—
It was all right then for a bard to pen
Lines to the gypsy trail.

The roads are wider—and smoother—now,
And are lit by the same old stars,
But the Romany rye had better not try
To compete with the racing cars.
You'd think the poets would notice that—
They're clever enough, I'm sure—
But they still write odes to the "open roads"
And the pull of the gypsy lure.

The nomad knows what the road is like,
And he gypsies never a gyp,
No wanderlust whim coerces him
To even a ten-mile trip.

But the poet longs in his ancient way
For the trail where campfires glow,
And he'll never cease (and give us some peace)
Till the day when he tries to go!

TAKE ANYTHING

Take the flush of the east at sunrise,
Or the grace of a wheeling bird,
Take a crescent moon and a still lagoon
Where hardly a breeze has stirred;
Take any beautiful object,
A pen and a writing pad,
And you'll presently find that you've designed
An elegant corset ad.

Take an aria by Puccini,
A poem by Edgar Poe,
Or the light that shines through bottled wines
In the city of old Bordeaux;
Take shimmering silks from Persia
Or a bag of gold doubloons,
And you'll weave a spell that is certain to sell
A million tons of prunes.

The poet dazzles the peasant
With the charm of the jeweled phrase,

Which has little to do with soap, 'tis true—
But, take it from me, it pays!
For a carefully culled allusion,
Regardless of what it means,
Sets the crowd on fire with a mad desire
To purchase a can of beans!

BOTANY LESSON

WHAT do we plant when we set out trees?
We plant soft buds for the frost to freeze
(Unless they are covered in time with cloth).
We plant a home for the codlin-moth.

We plant rash hopes of abundant fruit
That die with the death of each stricken shoot,
We plant straight saplings that bravely start,
Then crack in the middle, and fall apart.

What do we plant when we plant a tree?
We plant a thing that is seldom free
From this or the other insect pest,
Even supposing we've bought the best.

We plant a perch for the blithe cocoon—
With limbs we never get time to prune—
These are the things, believe you me,
The amateur plants when he plants a tree!

REVERIE IN AN OFFICE

A MODERN office gives me thrills—
It has machines for sending bills,
For adding figures and subtracting,
For showing how the market's acting,
Machines that never take vacations
From listening to long dictations;
It has, by grace of modern science,
Machines for keeping track of clients,
For making them contented debtors,
For sending them persuasive letters,
It has machines that neatly edit
The various details of credit,
Machines that never make mistakes
Or suffer from distracting aches,
That crave no chewing gum to munch
Or take an hour to eat their lunch.

If ever I'm a man of means,
I'll have an office with machines,
Including one of every kind
That it is possible to find,

And, as the shiny gadgets spin,
I'll sit and listen to their din,
I'll watch the patent filer file
And wear a beatific smile.
Then if, upon some busy day,
A captious visitor should say:
"But you've no business to transact!"
I will admit the obvious fact,
And keep on having loads of fun
Watching my bright machinery run.

LIMITS

They've invented television,
They've abolished space and night,
With the uttermost precision
They can gauge the speed of light;
Tiny atoms they can sever,
And the whole world sits enthralled,
But for all they are so clever,
They can never
Keep a man from getting bald.

Talking figures—yes, and singing—
Move upon a silver screen,
Wonder and amazement bringing
To us slaves of the machine;
But for all their incandescence
The inventors are a fake,
For they're made as dumb as peasants
By the presence
Of the nutshell in the cake.

Spectral forms and spirit faces,
Ether waves and cosmic rays

Are the very commonplaces
Of these awesome latter days;
But no pageant of inventions,
File on file and row on row,
Helps to soften the intentions
Or dimensions
Of the corn upon the toe!

SORRY, AND ALL THAT

When something I attempt falls flat,
I have to square myself for that;
When, aiming at the stars, I miss,
I have to square myself for this.
Apologies for various slips
Are almost always on my lips;
I'm up a figurative tree,
Which is an awful place to be.
A man should go his smiling way
And let the chips fall where they may,
Discern each fault, but rise above it,
And arrogantly say: "What of it?"
Whate'er befalls, he should disdain
To make excuses or explain,
For only cowards from censure shrink
Or give a hang what people think.

I think I shall reform, and try
To be a somewhat harder guy,
And not the timid sort of minion
Who worries about men's opinion;

I think hereafter I shall shun
Apologies for what I've done,
Find criticism's gun, and spike it,
Cry: "That for you, if you don't like it!"

That's what I think; I may be wrong—
Excuse me if I've talked too long.

AN ATHLETE PROTESTS

I SEEM to remember
When I was twenty-two
Tennis nets were lower—
Do you remember, too?
And as for tennis courts,
They were so small
That to dash around them
Was no work at all.

Now things are different,
To judge from my scores—
Tennis courts are bigger
Than all outdoors.
It makes me breathless
And all of a sweat,
Running from the baseline
Up to the net.

I think it's funny,
And not exactly fair,
Thus to treat an old man
With gray in his hair;

To make a ball that disappears
When I try to whack it
Over a high net
With a heavy racket.

Tennis is the best game
Of all summer sports—
They shouldn't try to play it
On such big courts,
With such wide alleys
And balls that aren't true—
Things were better managed
When I was twenty-two!

TERRIFYING FABLE ON A MODERN THEME

THERE once was a lady,
Gracious and sweet,
Grapefruit and lettuce
Were all she would eat;
Lettuce for luncheon
And grapefruit for dinner,
Because the dear lady
Desired to grow thinner.

Grapefruit by carloads
And lettuce by bales,
And ten ounces missing
Each day by the scales.
Flitting about
Likes the bees of Hymettus,
She always came back
To her grapefruit and lettuce.

And so she got thinner,
But found to her grief
She'd lost all her longing
For sirloin of beef.

Nothing could please her
But spinach and sass,
Like Nebuchadnezzar
She lived upon grass.

The more she ate lettuce
The thinner she grew,
Till, walking one day
Where a hurricane blew,
She was whirled across country,
Around and around,
Got lost in a haystack
And never was found!

RELATIVE SPEEDS

Like a greyhound after rabbits,
Like an eagle in its flight,
Like the wind across the prairies,
Like a darting beam of light,
Like the bullets that go whizzing
When their cartridges explode,
Is a motor car in action,
Streaking smoothly down the road.

Like an ancient horse and buggy,
Like an urchin off for school,
Like a lady window-shopping,
Like a stream that's calm and cool,
Like an awkward fellow groping
Through the parlor in the dark,
Is a motor car that loiters,
Looking for a place to park.

Like a large, basaltic boulder,
Like a lump of yeastless dough,
Like a dry Egyptian mummy
Laid away an age ago,

Like a moron's understanding
Or a money lender's heart,
Is a motor car in winter
When you try to make it start!

HUNTING SONG

A-HUNTING we will go,
A-hunting we will go,
We'll make our wills and seek the hills,
A-hunting we will go!

A touch of frost is on the ground,
The wind is in the west,
I'll whistle to my faithful hound
And don my armored vest;
I'll wear a shirt of fiery red
To reinforce my pluck,
For someone's sure to lose his head
And take me for a duck.

A-hunting we will go, *etc.*

I'll sally forth at break of day
With nerves acutely tense,
And soon I'll start to blaze away
At other hunting gents;

I'll put some bullets in their hides
And get a few in mine,
And I will undertake, besides,
To pot the farmer's kine.

A-hunting we will go,
A-hunting we will go,
Insure our lives to aid our wives,
A-hunting we will go.
Tantivy, tantivy, tantivy,
A-hunting we will go!

SYSTEM PAYS

The Little Woman she said, said she,
"How much wealthier we would be
If we'd kept track,
For a long time back,
Of the money we've handled, you and me."
And, she being fair, and I but human,
I said right back to the Little Woman:
"Angel of light,
You're perfectly right."
So we swore we'd scrutinize every cent,
And budgetty, budgetty, off we went.

The Little Woman, she took her pen
(For women budget better than men),
And parceled my pay
In a careful way,
With here a five per cent, there a ten;
And a sheet of figures she proudly waved,
Saying, "See here, darling, how much we've saved!
Enough and to spare
For some things I can wear,
And I'll get to the shops before they close"—
So budgetty, budgetty, there she goes!

LITERARY FORECAST

When I get to be sixty years old,
I'll retire from activity's strife,
And with paper and pen I will concentrate then
On writing the tale of my life.
I will tell of the struggles I've had,
And the thrilling adventures I've met;
I'll be solemn and sage at that excellent age,
Though I've not reached solemnity yet.

And when I am seventy-five,
If I'm still on this side of the Styx,
I will rest for a year, but I'll soon reappear
With the spirit of seventy-six;
And I'll turn out another long book
Of the best biographical lore.
I will have lots of fun telling things I have done
That I hadn't remembered before.

But the splendidest book of them all,
In which the whole truth will be told,
Will come from my pen in the period when
I get to be ninety years old.

For that, I've observed, is the age
When memories sparkle and glow
With wonderful facts of remarkable acts
More thrilling than if they were so.

THE TROUBLE WITH KEATS

"If Keats were writing to-day, no magazine editor would buy his poems."
FROM A LITERARY LECTURE

KEATS had his faults, as may be learned
From various books about his life;
He was, though genius in him burned,
No fit companion for a wife,
And it seems true beyond conjecture
He couldn't give a first-class lecture.

He wrote of nightingales and wine,
Was master of the classic phrase,
But would not get a cent a line
In these more literal-minded days.
Long poems make us cry "Aroint!"
We like them short and to the point.

I think if Keats were still alive,
And by an editor were told
What he must write if he would thrive,
He would not argue, plead, or scold,
But don his proud though battered kelly
And split a quart with Percy Shelley.

THE FALSE STEP

When people go to costume balls
Attired in some fantastic style,
Whether a tramp in overalls
Or Cleopatra of the Nile,
The hunch that they are fair to see
May be deep-rooted and unshaken—
But sakes alive! and oh, dear me!
Why must they have their pictures taken?

When lights are bright and music gay,
And lemonade is passed around,
The masquers in their mixed array
Appear distinguished and renowned;
The men are dashing, debonair,
The ladies would inspire a poet—
But I have noted, with despair,
The next day's pictures fail to show it.

My mourning is for art's sweet sake,
Esthetically I am pained,
For I have made the same mistake
And lived to wish I had refrained.

To caper in fantastic garb
Should in itself divert and please us
Without the self-inflicted barb
Of knowing how the kodak sees us!

A NATIONAL ANTHEM

(In which the conscientious author endeavors to be patriotic and, at the same time, perfectly fair.)

My country! Though I'll not deny
You have been wrong in days gone by;
Though I'll not pardon or condone
Your weaknesses, you are my own.
Though oft your moral progress halts,
I'll sing your praise with right good will—
With all your faults,
I love, I love you still.

My country! If at various times
You have committed sundry crimes,
And have not sought the shrine of truth,
Your sins have been the sins of youth.
I scorn the braggarts who indite
Loud, undiscriminating song—
Though often right,
You have, you have been wrong.

My country! Do not think that I
Would hesitate to bleed and die
(Because I can discern your flaws)
In advocacy of your cause.
Against all manner of assaults
I'll shield you with my utmost skill—
With all your faults,
I love, I love you still!

THE END

LINES TO A NEW DICTIONARY

Old words are cold words,
Nothing but a bore;
I prefer new words
I haven't seen before.
Any recent dictionary
Has them on tap—
Words like resupinate,
Lyncean, haplography,
Yaffle and Yapp.

Just what a yaffle is
Doesn't much matter;
Maybe it's like a yapp
But just a little flatter.
A man won a yapp once
Gambling in a raffle,
And when he got home with it
He found it was a yaffle.

Long words are strong words,
Easy on the eyes;
They make a man healthy,
Wealthy and wise.
Obmutescence, panicle,
Leave you feeling fine—
Run and get a dictionary,
One like mine!

From THE RASPBERRY TREE

1779

STODDARD KING

STODDARD KING holds the record for being the most plagiarized poet in the United States since the publication of that nation-sweeping poem, «Give Me a Loud Tie, Brother.» He is also the author of another favorite, «There's a Long, Long Trail.» And no one was more surprised than he when it became the national war song. It was written for a college event while Mr. King was a junior at Yale. Otherwise, Stoddard King is known as the columnist who makes the Spokane SPOKESMAN-REVIEW the breakfast staple of the Pacific Coast.